

Appendix L

Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reduction Subelement- Washington State Department of Commerce Approval

On May 26, 2026, the Whatcom County Council (“Council”) approved Resolution 2026-022, “Regarding Greenhouse Gas Reduction Sub-Element Voluntary Review,” relating to the 2026 Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update under the Washington State Growth Management Act (RCW 36.70A.096). Within 10 days of adoption of the Comprehensive Plan, Whatcom County will submit the greenhouse gas reduction sub-element application to the Washington State Department of Commerce (“Commerce”) for review, following the requirements listed in [RCW 36.70A.096\(3\)\(b\) \(2023\)](#). The State approval decision becomes final and the Greenhouse Gas Reduction subelement becomes effective upon publication by the State in the Washington State Register.

Per [RCW 36.70A.096](#), “Comprehensive Plans- Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reduction Subelement- Department Approval,” Commerce’s final decision to approve or reject a proposed greenhouse gas emissions reduction subelement or amendment must be based solely on whether or not the adopted or amended greenhouse gas emissions reduction subelement, any adopted amendments to other elements of the comprehensive plan necessary to carry out the subelement, and any adopted or amended development regulations necessary to implement the subelement, comply with the goal set forth in [RCW 36.70A.020\(14\)](#) as it applies to greenhouse gas emissions reductions, [RCW 36.70A.070\(9\)](#) excluding [RCW 36.70A.070\(9\)\(e\)](#), the guidelines adopted under [RCW 70A.45.120](#) applicable to the greenhouse gas emissions reduction subelement, or [chapter 43.21C RCW](#).

[WAC 365-196-443\(1\)](#) outlines requirements and recommendations for the planning process to develop a climate and resiliency element. The greenhouse gas reduction subelement must be designed to, “result in reductions in overall greenhouse gas emissions... which must include efforts to reduce localized greenhouse gas emissions.” The greenhouse gas emissions reduction subelement must also be consistent with guidelines published by Commerce pursuant to [RCW 70A.45.120](#) (Washington Department of Commerce 2023 Intermediate Climate Guidance). Actions not specifically identified in the guidelines developed by Commerce may be considered consistent with the guidelines only if the actions meet certain criteria. Actions will be considered consistent if those actions are projected to achieve greenhouse gas emissions reductions or per capita vehicle miles traveled reductions equivalent to what would be required of the jurisdiction under guidelines adopted by Commerce, and the actions are supported by scientifically credible projections and impact scenarios that indicate their adoption is likely to result in reductions of greenhouse gas emissions or per capita vehicle miles travelled.

Per Commerce recommendations for both the greenhouse gas reduction and resilience subelements, the climate element may take the form of a single chapter or may be a collection of climate goals and policies (for example, land use, housing, and transportation elements). Counties and cities that must create a greenhouse gas reduction subelement are required revise the subelement every comprehensive plan periodic update cycle, based on updated emissions data for the county's geographic area.

Counties and cities creating a greenhouse gas reduction subelement are also recommended to follow Commerce's five step planning process. This process includes conducting an inventory of local greenhouse gas emissions, including all emissions sources. The 2023 Washington State Department of Commerce Intermediate Guidance (p. 44) provides that counties voluntarily seeking Commerce's approval of the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Sub-element should use a Commerce-provided inventory to select mitigation goals and policies to satisfy the minimum requirements. This emissions data is intended to establish a baseline for 2022 countywide emissions that can be updated for five-year periodic reporting and support jurisdictions when developing incremental emission-reduction targets commensurate with Washington's 2050 statewide target, per [RCW 70A.45.020\(1\)\(c\)](#).

Guidance from the state also directs that if a local governmental entity decides to integrate greenhouse gas emission reduction goals and policies in other elements rather than with a single climate chapter, then the county or city should provide an index of the location of the full suite of climate measures in a memo when submitting its comprehensive plan for Commerce's review. The subjoined appendix serves to designate which goals and policies Council is directing are within the scope of the state review for the purposes of, "explaining how the adopted subelement complies with the provisions of [RCW 36.70A.096](#)." Final legislative action to adopt the Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan is codified in the Ordinance, "Adopting Amendments to the Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan and Foothills Subarea Plan for the Growth Management Act Periodic Review and Update."

Whatcom County Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reduction Subelement- Goals and Policies for State Review

In 2023, the Washington State Legislature passed House Bill 1181, an act relating to improving the state's climate response through updates to the state's planning framework. In addition to adding the climate element as a required element for certain jurisdictions, the following sections of RCW 36.70A were amended by the legislature relating to the Land Use and Transportation Elements as follows (amendments underlined):

- [RCW 36.70A.020\(3\)](#)- "Encourage efficient multimodal transportation systems that will reduce greenhouse gas emissions and per capita vehicle miles

traveled, and are based on regional priorities and coordinated with county and city comprehensive plans.”

- [RCW 36.70A.070\(1\)](#)- “Wherever possible, the land use element should consider utilizing urban planning approaches that promote physical activity and reduce per capita vehicle miles traveled within the jurisdiction, but without increasing greenhouse gas emissions elsewhere in the state.”
- [RCW 36.70A.070\(6\)\(B\)](#)- Multimodal level of service standards for all locally owned arterials, locally and regionally operated transit routes that serve urban growth areas, state-owned or operated transit routes that serve urban areas if the department of transportation has prepared such standards, and active transportation facilities to serve as a gauge to judge performance of the system and success in helping to achieve the goals of this chapter consistent with environmental justice. These standards should be regionally coordinated.

As part of the review procedures under [RCW 36.70A.130](#), Council initiated a full review of revisions to every chapter of the Comprehensive Plan. This included legislative action to review and revise the comprehensive plan to address new planning requirements, as well as Council-initiated amendments across multiple chapters. Consistent with county code, Council found that the public interest will be served by the amendments initiated and approved by Council ([Whatcom County Code 22.10.060](#)).

Given that the implementation progress report requirements for the climate element will include, “progress toward implementing any actions required to achieve reductions to meet greenhouse gas and vehicle miles traveled requirements as provided for any element of the comprehensive plan under [RCW 36.70A.070](#),” and Council has amended policies related to greenhouse gas emissions reductions throughout the Comprehensive Plan, Whatcom County will submit the subjoined index in the application for state review and approval.

Assuming Commerce approves the greenhouse gas subelement, it will provide a final determination through publication of the decision on the Washington State Register, indicating that the policies and goals, as identified in the index below, are consistent with state law and agency guidance. Any future modifications to the Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan policies that Commerce utilizes to make its approval determination, as listed in the final notice of approval, will require resubmittal of the greenhouse gas reduction subelement for Commerce approval.

Policy Index: Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan- Chapter 12- Climate Element- Greenhouse Gas Reduction Subelement- Goals and Policies (Preliminary Draft Council Motion) *-

* Goals and policies will be amended in Appendix L- Policy Index, subject to Council amendment and final action

Ch. 12	Climate- Greenhouse Gas Reduction Subelement- Background Summary
	<p>Until such time as Commerce adopts such guidelines for periodic reporting and Climate Element Implementation Progress Reports, Whatcom County will quantify countywide progress on greenhouse gas emissions and vehicle miles traveled reductions per capita for the Five-Year Climate Element implementation progress report required in RCW 36.70A.130(9) (2025) based on the following interim performance indicators.</p> <p>Consistent with the 2050 statewide net zero greenhouse gas emissions target set by the Washington State Legislature in RCW 70A.45.020 and adopted in Whatcom County Countywide Planning Policy T3:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All electric utilities serving retail customers in Whatcom County meet interim targets for greenhouse gas neutrality under WAC 194-40-040 (2026). • Natural gas utilities serving retail customers in Whatcom County meet each two-year therm conservation target, consistent with RCW 80.28.380 (2024). • Battery electric vehicles (BEVs) and plug-in hybrid electric passenger vehicles (PHEVs) registered in Whatcom County increase by at least 20% towards the target of 13,810 electric vehicles, in partnership with the private sector and developers, and subject to consumer demand and economic conditions. • Reduce annual vehicle miles traveled (VMT) per capita across incorporated and unincorporated Whatcom County by at least 3%, as measured by annual certified mileage reporting by the Washington State Department of Transportation.

Ch. 12	Climate- Greenhouse Gas Reduction Subelement- Agriculture & Food Systems (12-A)
12-A	Reduce greenhouse gas emissions from agriculture and food system activities that contribute to climate change.

12-A-1	Support incentives for renewable energy projects, including agrivoltaic systems, that integrate renewable energy production with ongoing agricultural activities.
12-A-2	Encourage agricultural producers to reduce the uses of fuels, agricultural supplies, synthetic fertilizers, and pesticides derived from fossil fuels.
12-A-3	Increase accessibility of locally produced agricultural products by supporting retail, institutional, and community market opportunities for local producers and food businesses.
12-A-4	Facilitate the development of local distribution networks and processing infrastructure to reduce distances traveled to transport agricultural goods and inputs.
12-A-5	Provide financial incentives and technical support for the replacement of conventional refrigeration systems with appliances that use alternative refrigerants, reducing pollutants from leaking cooling systems.
12-A-6	Partner with livestock producers to implement best practices for manure management, including anaerobic digesters and manure application to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and improve soil health.
12-A-7	Promote the adoption of efficient irrigation technologies and practices that minimize water use, increase soil water holding capacity, and reduce energy consumption associated with water treatment and distribution.

Ch. 12	Climate- Greenhouse Gas Reduction Subelement- Buildings & Energy (12-B)
12-B	Reduce emissions from building and energy use by promoting the transition to renewable energy sources, implementing green building standards, and retrofitting existing buildings to be more energy efficient.
12-B-1	Continue to implement the Washington State Building Code’s requirements for residential and commercial construction, including space and water heating guidelines for eligible new commercial construction and energy efficiency targets for residential construction.
12-B-2	Expand access to utility, state, and federal resources, technical assistance and incentives for the retrofitting of existing buildings to improve building operational efficiency.
12-B-3	Encourage the development of single and networked microgrids and distributed energy storage with battery back-up to support energy security, resilience, and affordability.
12-B-4	Promote the development of wind, hydroelectric, biomass, nuclear, tidal, wave, solar, and geothermal energy projects, including small-scale and community-owned renewable energy installations.
12-B-5	Advocate for utility investments in renewable energy development, energy efficiency incentives, and low-income energy assistance in Whatcom County to meet the Clean Energy Transformation Act compliance targets.
12-B-6	Encourage the design of highly energy-efficient new buildings that utilize on-site or off-site renewable energy, and include the use of low-carbon, recycled, or reused materials in building projects.

12-B-7	Update the Whatcom County code and development standards to incorporate best practices for renewable energy project permitting and siting, consistent with WA Healthy Environment for All (HEAL) Act guidance.
12-B-8	Improve construction resource efficiency by encouraging the use of locally or regionally derived building materials, such as wood and mass timber products that sequester and store embodied carbon.
12-B-9	Review bidding and procurement policies to prioritize lower-carbon building processes, sustainable and/or reclaimed building materials, energy efficiency, renewable energy, and alternative and active transportation infrastructure (such as electric vehicle charging and bicycle storage) in County funded capital projects.

Ch. 12	Climate- Greenhouse Gas Reduction Subelement- Cultural Resources (12-C)
12-C	Protect, avoid, minimize, or mitigate impacts to cultural resources from Climate Commitment Act funded programs or projects through meaningful consultation, as defined by HB 1753 (2022) and RCW 70A.65.305 (2024) , with the appropriate local, state, and federal authorities, including affected Indian Tribes.
12-C-1	At the earliest possible date prior to submittal of an application to receive funds from Climate Commitment Act accounts, Whatcom County will consult with the Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, Department of Fish and Wildlife and all interested federally recognized Tribes with treaty rights or interests in the project area, in accordance with RCW 70A.65.305 (2024) .
12-C-2	Consultation will be early, meaningful, and individual with any affected federally recognized Tribe, with the goal of identifying Tribal and cultural resources potentially affected by the funding decisions and funding programs, assess their effects, and seek ways to avoid, minimize, or mitigate any adverse effects on cultural resources.
12-C-3	Whatcom County will accept any documents summarizing Tribal issues, questions, concerns, or other statements regarding the project. The summary document submitted by Tribes during consultation will become part of the official application on file and do not limit what issues affected Tribes raise in the consultation process.
12-C-4	Whatcom County will adhere to all state and federal regulations that protect the location of certain cultural resources from disclosure. Any information that is exempt from disclosure pursuant to RCW 42.56.300 (2014) or federal law, including section 304 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, shall not become part of the official application file.
12-C-5	Consultation will be independent of, and in addition to, any public participation process required by federal or state law, or by a federal or

	state agency, including the requirements of Executive Order 21-02 related to archaeological and cultural resources.
12-C-6	Whatcom County will work with the state and Tribes to identify and determine the potential impacts, including cumulative impacts, on affected cultural resources during the review of large-scale renewable energy permitting applications.
12-C-7	Whatcom County will work with the state and Tribes to identify and evaluate the potential impacts, including cumulative impacts, of proposed low-carbon transportation projects, energy transmission, and water utility infrastructure expansion on cultural resources.
12-C-8	Development on sites adjacent to or containing cultural resources should be planned and carried out so as to be compatible with continued protection of that resource.

Ch. 12	Climate- Greenhouse Gas Reduction Subelement- Economic Development (12-D)
12-D	Support the development of a local economic system that fosters business operations and opportunities associated with climate action.
12-D-1	Assist property owners regulated under the Clean Buildings Performance Standard in accessing incentives to reduce building energy use and meet early compliance deadlines for Tier 1 and 2 buildings.
12-D-2	Consistent with the Climate Commitment Act, support covered industries’ participation in the Washington State cap-and-invest market.
12-D-3	Encourage the development of local carbon offset projects to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and generate industry investment in local carbon sequestration projects.
12-D-4	Support emissions reductions within the manufacturing sector by partnering to increase access to state and federal incentives for the adoption of less carbon-intensive equipment.
12-D-5	Encourage participation of qualified commercial, industrial, and multifamily properties in Whatcom County’s C-PACER (Commercial Property Assessed Clean Energy and Resilience Program) to finance energy efficiency, renewable energy, water conservation, and resilience projects.
12-D-6	Determine eligible uses of economic development incentives, such as consumption tax exemptions, property tax abatements, and tax increment financing, to support climate action projects.
12-D-7	Promote purchasing from local businesses to support economic development and reduce emissions associated with the production and distribution of goods.
12-D-8	Partner with Western Washington University, Whatcom Community College, Bellingham Technical College, Northwest Indian College, K-12 schools and skill centers, Northwest Workforce Council, the Port of Bellingham, the Whatcom Working Waterfront Coalition, cities, unions and apprenticeship programs, and local businesses to address workforce skill gaps in emerging sectors that support climate action.

Ch. 12	Climate- Greenhouse Gas Reduction Subelement- Ecosystems (12-E)
12-E	Protect, expand, retain, and restore open space, green space and tree canopy to promote aquatic and terrestrial carbon sequestration.
12-E-1	Identify, protect, and restore tidal wetlands and submerged aquatic vegetation, including seagrass, eelgrass, and kelp to enhance blue carbon sequestration.
12-E-2	Designate high-value greenspace and greenways for acquisition, conservation easements, or other preservation programs to enhance carbon sequestration and provide community benefits.
12-E-3	Increase, retain, and protect the tree canopy in UGAs, prioritizing underserved areas with low canopy cover and areas that may otherwise be vulnerable to urban heat island effects.
12-E-4	Develop and implement forest management plans for County-owned property, including individual parcels, parks, greenspace, and forestland to address climate stressors and guide adaptive management practices.
12-E-5	Discourage the conversion of forests, agricultural land, grasslands, wetlands, critical areas, riparian areas, estuaries, and other high-carbon storage areas for uses that are incompatible with habitat preservation and carbon sequestration goals.
12-E-6	Identify, protect, and restore riparian areas on public and private properties to protect water quality, salmon and wildlife habitat, and to store carbon in riparian vegetation, wetlands, and soils.

Ch. 12	Climate- Greenhouse Gas Reduction Subelement- Health (12-F)
12-F	Improve public health outcomes and advance health equity by increasing access to sustainable transportation, renewable energy, and locally produced food.
12-F-1	Protect, maintain, and invest in transportation infrastructure that promotes access to sustainable transportation options, such as walking, cycling, transit services, and electric vehicles.
12-F-2	Prioritize investments to reduce vehicle emissions and miles travelled in neighborhoods disproportionately affected by air and water pollution.
12-F-3	Ensure equitable access to clean drinking water, wastewater, and energy services by identifying and addressing utility infrastructure gaps, particularly in rural and underserved communities.
12-F-4	Coordinate with existing utility-run or state administered programs that provide financial assistance or subsidies for low-income households and landlords to improve energy efficiency, reduce utility costs, and access renewable energy.
12-F-5	Strengthen support for community-based programs that promote access to locally produced, healthy, and culturally appropriate food, particularly for individuals experiencing food insecurity.

12-F-6	Improve recreational access to public lands to promote equitable access to open space, greenspace, and parks and improved public health outcomes.
Ch. 12	Greenhouse Gas Reduction Subelement-Transportation (12-G)
12-G	Support reductions in per capita Vehicles Miles Traveled (VMT) and in greenhouse gas emissions per VMT by adopting new transportation planning approaches and technologies, expanding infrastructure, improving connectivity, and increasing access to low-carbon transportation options.
12-G-1	Support efforts to reduce per capita vehicle miles traveled (VMT) and single occupant vehicle trips, including compliance with the Commute Trip Reduction Act and other initiatives to increase carpooling, ridesharing, telecommuting, bicycling, rail, and transit use.
12-G-2	Work with Whatcom Council of Governments and cities to establish and track local and regionally coordinated per capita VMT reduction goals and policies consistent with the statewide reduction targets in RCW 47.01.440 (2023) .
12-G-3	Coordinate with WSDOT, Whatcom Council of Governments, Tribes, and cities to update the regional transportation plan to estimate and track transportation related greenhouse gas emissions by jurisdiction in Whatcom County.
12-G-4	Support initiatives that drive the adoption of fuel-efficient and low-emission freight technologies, including electric trucks and cleaner heavy-duty cargo-handling equipment.
12-G-5	Promote the adoption of electric vehicles (EVs) by increasing awareness of state and federal incentives for EV purchases and leases.
12-G-6	Collaborate with regional partners to facilitate and invest in the development and installation of a countywide electric vehicle (EV) charging network, including prioritizing underserved and disadvantaged communities to ensure equitable access.
12-G-7	Implement the countywide active transportation network and further expand an interconnected, regional multimodal network of pedestrian, bicycle, and transit facilities that enables more trips via walking, biking, and transit.
12-G-8	Encourage the adoption of battery-electric and low-carbon technology alternatives for off-road equipment used in construction, agriculture, and industrial activities.
12-G-9	Collaborate with Whatcom Transportation Authority (WTA) to ensure the operation and promote the use of a reliable, efficient, and equitable transit network that reduces emissions by promoting transit use over internal combustion engine vehicles.
12-G-10	Support Whatcom Transportation Authority’s goal to transition to a zero-emission fleet by 2040.

12-G-11	Support regional and industrial efforts to reduce emissions in the aviation sector through advancements in sustainable aviation fuel and aircraft technologies.
12-G-12	Support the Port of Bellingham’s initiatives to electrify shipping terminals and promote the transition to cleaner marine engines and equipment.
12-G-13	Support state and federal incentives to increase efficiency and replace diesel-powered passenger and freight trains with lower carbon alternatives.
12-G-14	Review bidding and procurement policies to prioritize lower-carbon materials and processes in County funded transportation and infrastructure projects.

Ch. 12	Climate- Greenhouse Gas Reduction Subelement- Waste Management (12-H)
12-H	Reduce emissions associated with waste management, sewage disposal, and wastewater treatment across Whatcom County.
12-H-1	Support reductions in waste hauler emissions by promoting efficiency in collection routes, reducing idle times, and transitioning fleets from diesel to low- or zero-carbon fuels.
12-H-2	Advocate for waste processors to adhere strictly to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and manufacturer guidelines for proper refrigerant decommissioning to reduce emissions during disposal.
12-H-3	Encourage the alignment of private waste haulers with the Whatcom County Comprehensive Solid and Hazardous Waste Management Plan to minimize waste generation and disposal emissions.
12-H-4	Support the expansion of organic material collection services to increase the diversion of waste from landfills, as required by RCW 70A.205.545 (2025) and consistent with RCW 70A.205.715 (2020) .
12-H-5	Consider revising Whatcom County’s Flow Control Ordinance (No. 91-041) to include the recycling of construction and demolition debris, promoting the reuse and recovery of building materials to reduce waste and associated emissions.
12-H-6	Support the adoption of technologies that reduce methane emissions in public wastewater treatment systems.
12-H-7	Expand the septic tank replacement rebate programs and septic inspections to incentivize the installation and maintenance of systems.
12-H-8	Compliant with RCW 70A.205.040 (2022) , Whatcom County will amend zoning code to allow for the siting of organic materials management facilities in the areas identified in RCW 70A.205.040(3)(a)(i) , to the extent necessary to provide for the establishment of the organic materials management volumetric capacity identified under RCW 70A.205.040(3)(a)(ii).

Ch. 12	Climate- Greenhouse Gas Reduction Subelement- Water Resources (12-I)
12-I	Work with water utilities to reduce emissions associated with water treatment through the adoption of new technologies and implementation of water conservation and efficiency practices.
12-I-1	Support efforts to improve energy efficiency in wastewater treatment through investment in advanced monitoring and control technologies that optimize energy use.
12-I-2	Support incentive programs to promote water conservation practices that reduce overall water demand and the energy required for water treatment.
12-I-3	Encourage the use of smart irrigation systems, stormwater management strategies, and preventative maintenance by water users to improve water efficiency.
12-I-4	Promote wastewater reuse and water conservation by water users to lower energy and water treatment emissions.

Ch. 12	Climate- Greenhouse Gas Reduction Subelement- Zoning & Development (12-J)
12-J	Implement dense, mixed-use, and transit-oriented development in UGAs, where appropriate, and land preservation policies in rural areas to reduce greenhouse emissions.
12-J-1	Adopt incentive programs, such as density bonuses and tax deferrals in Urban Growth Areas (UGAs) to promote compact, transit-oriented, and infill development, reducing vehicle miles traveled and associated transportation emissions.
12-J-2	Strengthen the Density Credit Program, Conservation Easement Program, and Transfer of Development Rights Program to promote higher-density developments and preservation of open spaces and rural lands for carbon sequestration.
12-J-3	Review Whatcom County code for opportunities to discourage conversion of forestland for non-forestry uses and agriculture land for non-agriculture uses.
12-J-4	Consistent with the Critical Areas Ordinance, strongly discourage development that would degrade wetlands to support carbon sequestration goals.
12-J-5	Evaluate mitigation monitoring to determine the effectiveness of critical areas protections and riparian management initiatives.
12-J-6	Support the creation of Whatcom County wetland mitigation banks that can be used by public and private development.

Policy Index: Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan- Chapter 2- Land Use (2CC, 2DDD), Chapter 4- Capital Facilities (4M), Chapter 5- Utilities (5G, 5H, 5T), Chapter 6- Transportation (6A, 6D, 6F, 6H, 6J, 6K)- Goals and Policies (Preliminary Draft Council Motion) *

* Goals and policies will be amended in Appendix L- Policy Index, subject to Council amendment and final action

Ch. 2	Land Use- Major Industrial Urban Growth Area- Cherry Point Urban Growth Area (2CC)
2CC-19-	Whatcom County recognizes the importance of regulatory certainty for lawful existing industrial facilities in the Cherry Point Urban Growth Area. The County intends to allow ongoing capital investment in existing facilities for: maintenance and replacement, operational reliability and safety improvements, emissions reduction and environmental performance improvements, energy efficiency improvements, regulatory compliance, product and market flexibility and fuel specification changes. Modernization and reinvestment projects that do not exceed expansion thresholds established in county code shall be treated as permitted activities consistent with the continued operation of lawful existing facilities. Expansions of fossil-fuel infrastructure remain subject to conditional use permits.
2CC-20	Storage tanks and related logistics infrastructure are necessary for safe operations, product blending, regulatory compliance, renewable fuel handling, and market supply flexibility. Such infrastructure should not necessarily be considered an expansion of refinery capacity solely because they increase storage volume. Adequate storage capacity is essential to maintaining safe, efficient, and economically viable operations within modern fuel supply systems. Whatcom County recognizes that modifications designed to comply with new fuel standards may require additional infrastructure to meet market demands and should be allowed to facilitate job creation and meet climate goals as outlined in Chapter 12 – Climate.
2CC-21	Whatcom County recognizes that the regional energy system is undergoing a long-term transition toward lower-carbon fuels and technologies. The County intends to support this transition in a manner that is orderly, predictable, and protective of public safety, environmental quality, and economic stability. Existing lawful industrial facilities within the Cherry Point Urban Growth Area may continue to operate and invest in modernization, safety improvements, emissions reductions, fuel flexibility, and renewable fuel infrastructure necessary to adapt to evolving energy markets. The County should regulate new fossil-fuel infrastructure and capacity expansion consistent with County code to provide clear and predictable guidance that allows existing facilities to safely adapt to changing fuel demand, environmental standards, and emerging energy technologies. It is the intent of this policy to support

	responsible environmental progress without creating unintended incentives for premature facility closure, disinvestment, or supply disruptions during the energy transition. Whatcom County recognizes that modernization of existing refinery infrastructure may improve safety, environmental performance, and operational efficiency. Modifications to refinery processing systems that increase processing capacity may be considered where such projects demonstrate a net environmental benefit compared to existing operations. A net environmental benefit may include reductions in emissions intensity, improvements in energy efficiency, reductions in environmental risk, improved fuel specifications, or other measurable environmental performance improvements. Projects proposing increased processing capacity should demonstrate that the overall environmental outcome represents an improvement relative to existing facility operations. The intent is not to encourage refinery expansion, but to allow modernization projects that leave the environment better off than it is today. If a project can demonstrate a net environmental benefit through lower emissions intensity, improved efficiency, or safer operations it should be considered.
Ch. 2	Land Use- Vehicle Miles Travelled Per Capita (2DDD)
2DDD	Wherever possible, consider utilizing urban planning approaches that reduce per capita vehicle miles traveled within the County, but without increasing greenhouse gas emissions elsewhere in the state.
2DDD-1	Support compact mixed-use development near transit in UGAs to improve transit accessibility and reduce vehicle trips.
2DDD-2	Support development of a safe, well-connected, and attractive bicycle and pedestrian transportation network to connect communities and destinations.
2DDD-3	Support efforts to reduce per capita vehicle miles traveled and single occupant vehicle trips, including compliance with WCC 16.24 (Commute Trip Reduction) and other initiatives to increase carpooling, ridesharing, telecommuting, bicycling, rail, and transit use.
2DDD-4	Coordinate with cities and employers to plan for development of housing, services, alternative transportation, and infrastructure in proximity to employment to reduce vehicle miles traveled.
Ch. 4	Capital Facilities- Climate (4M)
4M	Plan for greenhouse gas emissions reduction and climate resilience as part of all capital projects included in the County’s Capital Improvement Program.
4M-1	Install fleet and publicly accessible electric vehicle charging infrastructure at new and existing County facilities, as required by WAC 51-50-0429 , and in support of fleet electrification requirements under RCW 43.19.648 , to the extent practicable.
4M-2	Construct new and renovated County facilities over 5,000 square feet to a minimum of LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Silver

	standard where feasible, as required in County resolution 2005-028, and evaluate costs to meet LEED Gold or Platinum certification level.
4M-3	Retrofit County owned buildings, that are regulated under the Clean Buildings Performance Standard, to meet energy use intensity targets set by the state’s energy benchmarking law, RCW 19.27A.210 .
4M-4	Site solar systems with battery storage at County facilities, where suitable.
4M-7	Explore opportunities to support alternative infrastructure models and off-grid and distributed renewable energy systems serving public facilities development, where such systems reduce reliance on existing infrastructure and advance the County's climate resilience goals.

Ch. 5	Utilities- Regulatory Controls Encouraging Energy Conservation and Efficiency (5G)
5G	Support cost-effective conservation as a significant supply factor and implement policies that promote energy conservation measures.
5G-1	Land use regulations shall be consistent with the conservation and other goals in this chapter and the climate element.
5G-2	Encourage and support the use of energy conservation strategies and technologies.
5G-3	Support energy conservation and energy efficiency in all proposed residential, commercial, and industrial projects by improving the energy efficiency of new construction and the existing building stock through building codes and practices, and support refurbishing and remodeling projects to include energy efficient components via expedited permitting and assistance.
5G-4	Facilitate and encourage conservation of resources, in order to delay the need for additional facilities for electrical energy and water resources, and to maintain adopted air quality standards.
5G-5	The County should work with utility providers and consider opportunities for coordinated education and outreach and to inform the public about energy efficiency and renewable energy sources.
5G-6	Consider the County's potential role in supporting rural off-grid residential development in partnership with landowners and partners, where such development is designed to minimize public infrastructure demand, including demand on the energy grid, generate useful performance data, and remain consistent with the long-term use of adjacent resource lands.
Ch. 5	Utilities- Low Carbon or Renewable Energy (5H)
5H-1	Land use regulations shall be consistent with the renewable energy and other goals in this chapter and the climate element
5H-2	Explore emerging low-carbon or renewable energy technologies, and when applicable, update Whatcom County Code as needed to support renewable energy production, generation, transmission, and distribution.
5H-3	Whatcom County should engage and coordinate with Tribal treaty rights holders and other impacted communities before recommending resource,

	land, or water-intensive energy projects such as hydroelectricity, nuclear, and tidal energy when the County has permitting responsibilities.
5H-4	Encourage and support the development of low-carbon or renewable energy projects and technologies, such as anaerobic digesters and solar, battery energy storage systems, and wind energy, geothermal, nuclear, wave, tidal, and green hydrogen, where applicable.
5H-5	Support renewable energy incentives to businesses and groups to install renewable energy systems.
5H-6	Coordinate with the Department of Ecology for eligible renewable energy products through the Clean Energy Coordinated Permitting Process, Chapter 43.158 RCW .
5H-7	Work with utilities regulated under the Clean Energy Transformation Act (CETA) to ensure Clean Energy Implementation Plans align with state target for an electricity supply free of greenhouse gas emissions by 2045.
5H-8	Support Whatcom Public Utility District’s energy efficiency programs and exploration of alternative energy sources, such as geothermal and fusion.
5H-9	Support regional and statewide efforts to develop utility scale renewable projects to increase production of energy from renewable sources, such as wind, solar, green hydrogen, and other alternatives.
5H-10	Explore pathways to support integrated off-grid renewable energy and utility systems —including solar generation with battery storage and alternative onsite wastewater treatment — serving low-impact rural residential development on resource lands, subject to applicable state health and building codes, site suitability, and County capacity considerations. Consider off-grid renewable energy systems as a complementary distributed energy strategy.
5H-11	Support reliable, affordable, resilient, and environmentally responsible energy systems, including renewable, non-carbon or low-carbon, and emerging energy technologies, while ensuring appropriate protection of natural resources, treaty rights, cultural resources, public safety, and rural character.
5H-12	Recognize geothermal energy, including hydrothermal, direct- use, closed-loop, and other emerging geothermal technologies, as a potential renewable energy resource that may contribute to regional energy reliability, economic development, and greenhouse gas reduction goals.
5H-13	Recognize that certain non-carbon or renewable energy resources, including geothermal resources, may be geographically constrained and may require case-specific siting considerations based on geology, thermal resource location, transmission availability, environmental constraints, and public safety considerations.
5H-14	The County should periodically evaluate and update development regulations, permitting procedures, definitions, and environmental review processes related to non-carbon, renewable, and emerging energy technologies to ensure regulations remain effective, scientifically

	informed, and consistent with state law, technological advances, and regional energy needs.
5H-15	The County may adopt or amend land use designations, zoning classifications, development regulations, conditional use procedures, performance standards, or other implementing regulations to accommodate non-carbon or renewable resource energy generation, storage, transmission, and related infrastructure, including location-dependent energy resources, where appropriate and consistent with environmental review, public safety, and resource protection goals.
5H-16	Non-carbon or renewable resource energy generation, storage, transmission, and supporting utility infrastructure may serve essential public functions and should not be categorically precluded from consideration within the County where impacts can be appropriately mitigated.
Ch. 5	Utilities- Solid Waste Management (5T)
5T	Support Washington’s organic management goal of reducing organic waste going to the landfill by 75% in eligible Business Organic Management Areas and eligible residential customers, through source reduction, composting, anaerobic digestion, or other means.
5T-1	The County’s goal is to reduce Whatcom County’s share of food waste sent to landfills by 50%, consistent with the Use Food Well Washington Plan, Whatcom County Food Systems Plan, Whatcom County Climate Action Plan, and Comprehensive Solid and Hazardous Waste Management Plan.
5T-2	Participate in state programs to conduct regular audits of food waste sources across the county, establish food waste reduction programs, and support stakeholders required to comply with Washington’s organic management law.
5T-3	Increase diversion from the landfill by providing financial incentives to programs that donate surplus food to food banks and food shelters.
Ch. 6	Transportation- Multimodal Level of Service Standard- Pedestrian, Bicycle, Transit (6A)
6A	Provide for the long-term safe and efficient movement of people and goods, taking into consideration mitigation of climate impacts and natural hazards, by establishing and maintaining multimodal level of service (MMLOS) standards levels of service for motor vehicle traffic volumes compared to roadway capacity (Maps 6-5, 6-6, and 6-10) and for Active Transportation Network (ATN) completeness (Maps 6-2, 6-7, and 6-8).
6A-7	Pedestrian MMLOS Standards on the countywide Active Transportation Network (Maps 6-2, 6-7, and 6-8) are listed below; incorporate these standards into long-range capital planning and Six-Year TIP programming to achieve network completion over time subject to funding availability: A. Incorporated UGA: Urban standard sidewalks both sides or shared two-way multiuse pathway one side.

	<p>B. Unincorporated UGA: Urban standard sidewalk both sides or shared two-way multiuse pathway one side.</p> <p>C. Rural County: 5-foot-wide shoulder on roadway</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Green = Complete Network Link, meets County standards • Yellow = Incomplete Network, doesn't meet County standards • Red = Missing Network Link, doesn't meet County standards
6A-8	<p>Bicycle MMLOS Standards on the countywide Active Transportation Network (Map 6-2, 6-7, and 6-8) are listed below; incorporate these standards into long-range capital planning and Six-Year TIP programming to achieve network completion over time subject to funding availability:</p> <p>A. Incorporated UGA: Urban standard marked bike lanes both sides or shared two-way multiuse pathway one side.</p> <p>B. Unincorporated UGA: Urban standard marked bike lanes both sides or shared two-way multiuse pathway one side.</p> <p>C. Rural County: 5-foot-wide shoulder on roadway</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Green = Complete Network Link, meets County standards • Yellow = Incomplete Network, doesn't meet County standards • Red = Missing Network Link, doesn't meet County standards
6A-9	<p>The Transit MMLOS Standard is based on site readiness for installation of stop amenities and ADA accessibility of WTA transit bus stops within the public road right-of-way. The prioritization and completion of ADA upgrades at all WTA bus stops provides mutual benefit to Whatcom County and WTA.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gold = ADA Compliant Pedestrian Connection to Transit Stop and a landing pad sufficient to support a transit shelter • Green = ADA Compliant Transit Stop and ADA-compliant pedestrian connection to transit stop or a landing pad sufficient to support a transit shelter • Orange = Non-ADA-compliant transit Stop and substandard pedestrian connection to transit stop and a landing pad sufficient to support a transit shelter • Red = Non-compliant Transit Stop and No Pedestrian Connection to Transit Stop
6A-10	<p>Continue to evaluate using Level of Traffic Stress (LTS) as the MMLOS standard for pedestrian and bicycle facilities on the countywide Active Transportation Network, including studying the appropriate LTS for Rural County roads that form connections between population and employment centers located in UGAs and cities.</p>
Ch. 6	Transportation- Coordination with Land Use (6D)
6D	<p>Support land use planning efforts in Whatcom County that include land use types and densities that promote walking, biking, and transit and reduces reliance on single-occupant vehicles and vehicle miles traveled.</p>

6D-1	Allow densities and mixed uses in urban areas to reduce the number and length of vehicle trips, increase opportunity to use public transportation, and encourage pedestrian and bicycle trips.
6D-2	Promote land use strategies and transportation investments that reduce single occupant vehicle trips and vehicle miles traveled while discouraging transportation improvements investments that would trigger development that is premature or not consistent with applicable comprehensive plans, policies, or zoning.
6D-3	Support continual education of the public regarding the relationship between transportation and land use issues and ways to support walking, biking, and transit to help reduce traffic congestion.
6D-5	Ensure that new developments provide safe and efficient infrastructure for pedestrians and bicyclists.
6D-6	Prioritize transportation investments and encourage new housing developments to be located in urban growth areas to help provide a sense of community and safe, active nonmotorized transportation to community facilities and public transit nodes.
6D-8	Support compatible land uses on the multimodal regional transportation system, including state highways subject to state Complete Streets requirements, to address all user needs.
Ch. 6	Transportation- Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities (6F)
6F	Develop a countywide Active Transportation Network (Map 6-2) of bicycle and pedestrian facilities that encourages enhanced community access and promotes healthy lifestyles and supports both the transportation and recreational segments of our economy.
6F-1	Planning and design shall emphasize connectivity to the greatest extent possible, creating regional networks of bicycle and pedestrian facilities. Regional networks include both an on-road bicycle facility and walkway network and a regional multi-use path network. These networks should be interconnected; for example, walkways connect seamlessly with pedestrian paths and bike lanes connect to shared-roadway bike routes. The networks should also be coordinated with public transportation hubs and activity centers to enable multimodal trips of longer distances.
6F-2	Provide safe pedestrian facilities in all new construction and reconstruction transportation projects where there is the potential for significant use, unless physically or financially impracticable. An example of such a location would be in a traffic corridor within one mile of a school or community center that links residents to such facilities. Traditional curb/gutter/sidewalk designs may not be the standard approach in these areas since they are expensive, require large impervious surfaces, and may detract from the rural atmosphere. Other separated walkway designs should be considered that provide a physical separation or a barrier from motorized traffic
6F-3	An effective bicycle and pedestrian system for Whatcom County will require facilities for both regional connectivity and local access. Regional

	<p>connectivity can be defined as transportation routes connecting major activity centers, towns, and cities within the region. A good example of a regional facility would be the Bay to Baker Trail or the proposed Salish Coast Trail.</p>
<p>6F-4</p>	<p>Coordinate design and implementation of multimodal transportation system improvements with cities, WTA, local community organizations, associations, or other governing structures. Collect and use the best available data to identify, analyze, and prioritize multimodal transportation. projects based on the following criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • safety improvements are needed • serves a residential or relatively high density rural or urban population area • serves a location frequently traveled by seniors, children, or people with disabilities • leads to a school or is part of a school route • provides access to a recreational facility or park • functions as a key network link for the regional active transportation network • offers economic development potential for an underserved area • ease of implementation due to low cost, public ownership, or other features • increases public safety and resilience to climate impacts and natural hazards <p>Project prioritization should utilize a transparent and publicly available scoring framework that evaluates safety benefits, network connectivity, school access, traffic/stress rating, climate resilience, and cost effectiveness. The scoring criteria and results should be published as part of the Six-Year TIP development process.</p>
<p>6F-5</p>	<p>Fund an update to the existing (2011) Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan to be included in the Active Transportation Network (Map 6-2) improvement planning that identifies and prioritizes future pedestrian and bicycle facilities. The updated plan should identify and prioritize development of low- stress active transportation corridors that provide safe and comfortable connections between urban growth areas, rural communities, schools, and major activity & transit centers. Give priority to construction of pedestrian and bicycle facilities on streets within and between urban growth areas and rural communities where practical, and not at risk from climate impacts or natural hazards, and give priority to walkways and crosswalks along roadways within a one-mile radius of schools.</p>
<p>6F-6</p>	<p>For commercial and residential developments within urban growth areas and rural communities, developers shall fund on- street walkways, paths, crosswalks, consideration of regional trail segments, and other pedestrian accommodations, along with internal walkways or paths for onsite circulation that are necessary to provide pedestrian access from public streets to building entrances and within and between buildings.</p>

6F-8	Publish an Annual Concurrency Report documenting the status of the countywide multimodal transportation system to inform investment in transportation facilities in the Whatcom County six-year transportation improvement program (TIP).
6F-9	Prioritize active transportation projects that utilize existing public rights-of-way, surplus roadway capacity, or publicly owned corridors to accelerate network completion and reduce implementation barriers.
6F-10	Develop and maintain a phased implementation strategy for achieving completion of the countywide Active Transportation Network (Map 6-2), including interim solutions where full buildout is not immediately feasible. Progress toward network completion shall be tracked and reported annually.
Ch. 6	Transportation- Intergovernmental Coordination and Implementation (6H)
6H-12	<p>Inform and coordinate early and often with WSDOT to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Identify and plan for projects on or across state facilities. b. Identify and plan for projects to support multimodal use along and across the regional transportation network including state highways consistent with RCW 47.04.035 Complete Streets principles. c. Identify and plan for projects to support multimodal use along and across the regional transportation network including state highways consistent with the WSDOT Active Transportation Plan. d. Pursue support and funding for recommended projects identified in the 6-year Transportation Improvement Plan and the Capital Improvement Plan. e. Support maintenance in state rights of way or state facilities based on maintenance agreements. f. Review development projects near or adjacent to state facilities to coordinate local access and address transportation needs for all users. g. Minimize private access to state highways to enhance safety and mitigate chances of vehicle collisions. h. Coordinate with WSDOT to ensure that improvements meet the need of development and maintain MMLOS standards. i. Establish that proposed improvements on state facilities are consistent with the WSDOT Design Manual. j. Coordinate alterations to landscaping in WSDOT right-of-way are consistent with WSDOT removal and replacement policies, in coordination with maintenance agreements. k. To determine shared priorities related to international border crossings.
Ch. 6	Transportation- Congestion and Emissions Reduction (6J)
6J	Reduce the need for costly capacity-increasing roadway construction projects, and minimize emissions from combustion of fossil fuels, through completion of the Active Transportation Network (Map 6-2), motor vehicle

	travel demand reduction programs, promoting transit, and the use of intelligent transportation technology.
6J-1	Develop programs that reduce single-occupant vehicle use and vehicle miles traveled, minimizing trip length and reducing travel during peak periods, in order to minimize fuel consumption and the emission of greenhouse gases. These programs include, but are not limited to, trip reduction programs in coordination with major employers, other jurisdictions, and the Whatcom Transportation Authority.
6J-2	Support a regional public transit system that connects with various modes of transportation including auto, bicycle, and pedestrian travel and with the intercity bus, rail, ferries and airline facilities.
6J-3	Coordinate with Whatcom Transportation Authority to establish rural transit service in unincorporated areas, including Rural Communities and Rural areas, consistent with county land use plans, based on cost effectiveness, location of major trip generators, distance between generators, and the needs of transit-dependent individuals.
6J-4	Coordinate with Whatcom Transportation Authority and Washington State Department of Transportation to consider redevelopment of existing under-utilized park-and-ride lots along major corridors as Transit-Oriented Development opportunities to encourage infill development and transit use.
6J-5	Support multimodal use by encouraging, for example, secure bicycle storage facilities at park-and-ride lots and other transit facilities, and providing for the transportation of bicycles on public transit vehicles.
6J-8	Work with Whatcom County and the Sudden Valley Association to provide appropriate level of transit service to Sudden Valley to reduce traffic in the Lake Whatcom watershed.
6J-9	Encourage the development and installation of a comprehensive electric vehicle charging network, including the following opportunities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allow charging stations in commercial parking lots and other convenient locations; • Provide a streamlined and expedited permitting process for charging stations; • Provide incentives to developers, employers, and organizations that provide charging stations; • Consider requirements to include infrastructure for charging stations in multifamily and commercial developments; and • Pursue partnerships with Puget Sound Energy to consider voluntary development of charging stations to reduce costs.
Ch. 6	Transportation- Funding of Transportation Improvements (6K)
6K-7	Allocate at least 5% of funding in the County’s Six-Year Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) to projects that advance completion of the countywide Active Transportation Network (Map 6-2), including pedestrian, bicycle, and ADA accessibility improvements. Progress toward this goal shall be reported annually in the Concurrency Report.